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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 000105

SIPDIS

AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN PASS TO AMEMBASSY GRENADA
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PASS TO AMCONSUL QUEBEC
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PASS TO AMCONSUL RECIFE
AMEMBASSY BERLIN PASS TO AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF
AMEMBASSY BERLIN PASS TO AMCONSUL LEIPZIG
AMEMBASSY ATHENS PASS TO AMCONSUL THESSALONIKI

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2020/01/28

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [VE](#) [PINR](#)

SUBJECT: Raising RCTV and Haiti with Venezuelan Foreign Ministry

REF: 10 STATE 6918; 10 CARACAS 103; 10 CARACAS 75; 10 CARACAS 89
10 CARACAS 23; 10 CARACAS 99

CLASSIFIED BY: Robin D. Meyer, Political Counselor, State, POL;
REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

¶1. (C) Summary. In a January 27 lunch with the Venezuelan Foreign Ministry's Director for North American Affairs, Yaneth Arocha, Polcouns raised U.S. concerns about official Venezuelan misinformation about U.S. assistance efforts in Haiti (ref a) and the closure of RCTV. Arocha said she would review the non-paper and diplomatic note regarding Haiti (ref b), but insisted RCTV was an internal issue. End Summary.

RCTV a Destabilizing Factor

¶2. (C) In a January 27 lunch with Yaneth Arocha, the Director for North American Affairs, and Wendy Vitera, the desk officer for the United States, Polcouns delivered ref a demarche regarding U.S. assistance to Haiti (reported separately in ref b) and expressed U.S. concern about the closing of RCTV (refs c and d). (Note: The Embassy had earlier expressed public concern about the closing of RCTV, saying that "access to information is a cornerstone of democracy" and that "by restricting yet again the Venezuelan people's access to RCTV broadcasts, the Venezuelan government continues to erode this cornerstone." End Note.) While emphasizing that she had no instructions on the issue, Arocha insisted that the government's action regarding RCTV was an internal matter. She said that RCTV was simply being required to follow the law regarding national cable producers and had recourse through Conatel, the media regulatory agency, if they wanted to appeal their classification as a "national" producer. She stressed that the airwaves were social property; RCTV President Granier "should form his own political party" and not use RCTV as a political platform. She alleged that the protests surrounding RCTV's closing were timed to take advantage of the sensitive electoral and energy environment in the country. (Note: In fact, the GBRV chose the timing, with its January 21 decision to classify RCTV as a "national" producer and its January 23 announcement that it had asked the major cable operators to stop transmitting networks not in compliance with the requirements for "national" producers. End Note.)

MFA Restructuring Plans Overturned

¶3. (C) Arocha said that the longstanding plan to combine the North America and Latin America desks into an "Americas Desk," reporting to a new Vice Minister for the Americas, had been cancelled. She said the MFA would continue as currently structured, with the North America Desk (covering the United States and Canada) reporting to Ambassador Valero, who would continue to serve as both the Vice Minister for North America and the Permanent Representative to the United Nations.

¶4. (C) Arocha, who returned to her position after a yearlong absence, observed that she no longer felt as free to deal with the U.S. Embassy as she had previously. Relations used to be "fluid," but now "it's hard."

Bio Note

¶5. (C) Arocha returned to the position of Director of North American Affairs after a yearlong absence to care for her 41-year

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old Amcit husband, who died in November 2009. They had been married for only a year before he took ill. Arocha is a 20-year career diplomat who served overseas in at the Venezuelan Mission in Geneva and at the Venezuelan embassies in Tel Aviv and Guatemala City. Within the MFA, she served as the Director for Caribbean Affairs before assuming the position as Director for North America in 2005. Both she and Viteri expect to be assigned to the Venezuelan Mission to the United Nations in New York as soon as a budget freeze has been lifted.

Comment

¶6. (C) The MFA restructuring plan was to have made Francisco Arias Cardenas, the current Vice Minister for Latin America, the new Vice Minister for the Americas. Arias Cardenas, who met with Ambassador Duddy on January 8 (ref e), has figured prominently in recent rumors regarding a possible Cabinet reshuffle, with the press speculating about his possible appointment as either Vice President or Foreign Minister. President Chavez' January 25 appointment of Elias Jaua as Vice President (ref f) has put a temporary end to this speculation, but post expects rumors about Arias Cardenas' future role in the Chavez government to reappear.
CAULFIELD